



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Milwaukee County

Héctor Colón MS, OT
Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Conversations aim to gain feedback for development of Northside behavioral health facility

Consumer, family member conversations are the first in a series to include additional stakeholder groups

Milwaukee, WI (December 13, 2016) The Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division (BHD) is inviting residents with mental illness and their family members to share insights that will shape the organization's new Northside facility. BHD is in the early stages of developing the community-based behavioral health center to provide access to services for Milwaukee County's most underserved populations.

"Behavioral health is an important part of a person's overall health. If you need support, you should get it before you are in crisis," says Héctor Colón, Director of the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services.

"We would not tell an individual with heart disease to wait 60 days for treatment, but sometimes people with behavioral health challenges have to wait that long or longer to receive care. Our department is taking the lead to change that."

BHD's first community-based center is planned for the County's Northside where access to community-based primary care and behavioral health services are limited and health care disparities are high, according to the 2015-2016 *Milwaukee County Community Health Needs Assessment* conducted by the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership. Studies show individuals with behavioral health conditions are twice as likely as the general population to also have health conditions like diabetes, asthma, heart disease and hypertension.

"This new facility will integrate primary care and behavioral health care to treat the whole person. This integrated model is recognized today as a best practice," says Mike Lappen, administrator for the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division. "Our goal is to provide access to best practice care and support before people are in crisis. To do this right, we need to engage the individuals we serve at BHD in the decision making."

Four community conversations for people with mental illness and their family members are planned for December 2016 and January 2017.

When	Where
Friday, December 16, 2016 1:30 PM (start) to 3:30 PM	Progressive Baptist Church 8324 W. Keefe Ave. Milwaukee, 53223
Tuesday, December 20, 2016 2:30 PM (start) to 4:30 PM	Metropolitan Baptist Church, 1345 West Burleigh Street, Milwaukee, 53206
Wednesday, January 04, 2017 1:30 PM (start) to 3:30 PM	Metropolitan Baptist Church, 1345 West Burleigh Street, Milwaukee, 53206
Wednesday, January 25, 2017 Time: TBD	Metropolitan Baptist Church, 1345 West Burleigh Street, Milwaukee, 53206

The community conversations will be facilitated by Pastor Darryl Seay, M.S. and open to Milwaukee County residents with behavioral health conditions and their family members. Attendees will be asked for input on everything from programs and services provided to how the facility should look and feel.

Milwaukee County Mental Health Board member, Pastor Walter Lanier, says engaging consumers now is the right thing to do.

“Turning to the people we serve is extremely important,” says Lanier. “If we want the community and their families to visit with us before they are in crisis, and to keep coming back throughout their recovery, they should have a say in how this facility comes together.”

This is the second-time BHD will reach into the community for input on the Northside facility. In the fall of 2015, BHD worked with area churches and neighborhood groups to gain insight from people with mental illness and their family members. Feedback from these conversations led BHD to develop an integrated health model for the center, adding primary care and family support in addition to behavioral health and crisis services. The new round of community conversations are intended to finalize the list of services that will be provided and guide the facility’s design.

Additional community conversations will be planned for the first quarter of 2017 to include healthcare professionals, advocacy groups, law enforcement and others.

The Northside facility is one step in the Behavioral Health Division’s transformation to become a national leader in integrated behavioral health care, moving from a hospital-based provider of acute psychiatric care to a comprehensive provider of preventive, treatment and recovery oriented care in hospital and community-based settings.

For more information on these community conversations or to provide feedback online visit: the [Northside Facility](#) page of BHD’s website or email communityrelations@milwaukeecountywi.gov.

About the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division

The Behavioral Health Division provides care and treatment to adults, children, and adolescents with mental illness, substance use disorders, and intellectual disabilities through both County-operated programs and contracts with community agencies.

About the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services

The mission of the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services is to enhance the quality of life for individuals who need support living healthy, independent, and safe lives within our community. Our vision is to be recognized as the public model of excellence, leadership, and partnership in human services driving superior outcomes for our community.

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For more information about this topic or to schedule an interview contact Kimberly Kane at (414) 202-5762 or kimberly.kane@milwaukeecountywi.gov.